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STATE OF MAINE

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTIETH LEGISLATURE

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM AND HEALTH SECURITY BOARD

News Release

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Feasibility Study of Single-Payer Health Care System Generates Unexpected Interest

The Health Care System and Health Security Board, established by the Maine Legislature to examine the costs of a single-payer health care system, has generated unexpected interest from health care consultants in its nationwide search for an organization to conduct a feasibility study. The Board has received 5 proposals from nationally-recognized health care consulting firms.

The Health Security Board, chaired by Senator John Martin (D-Eagle Lake) and Representative Paul Volenik (D-Brooklin), expects the feasibility study to encompass an analysis of different funding options and different benefit configurations and model the impact on the economy and individuals of various plan configurations for a single-payer system. "We are pleased at the response to our request for proposals," said Senator Martin. "The Board will have the enviable task of selecting a contractor from among these high quality proposals."

The Health Security Board will meet Friday, July 12th in Augusta to evaluate each proposal and expects to select a contractor for the feasibility study by July 22, 2002. "The feasibility study will move the dialogue forward over how to achieve universal access for Maine citizens," said Rep. Volenik. "An objective and in-depth analysis of a single-payer plan is needed so policymakers and the public can assess whether such a plan is right for Maine."

To support the feasibility study, the Health Security Board is seeking a \$200,000 grant from the Maine Health Access Foundation, Inc., which was created with the charitable assets of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Maine after its sale to Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield. The Board has also raised over \$34,000 in private donations. "We believe these funds are critical for a complete and thorough assessment of the economic and financial impact of a single-payer plan," said Sen. Martin.

The Health Security Board is a bipartisan task force whose purpose is to "develop recommendations to provide health care coverage to all citizens of this State through a plan or plans that emphasize 24-hour coverage, quality, cost containment, choice of provider and access to comprehensive, preventive and long-term care." The Health Security Board has 19 members including representatives of both branches and both parties within the Legislature, the Department of Human Services, the State Employee Health Commission and the State Tax Assessor and representatives of provider organizations, employers, insurers and advocacy groups. The Board will make its full report to the Legislature in December 2002.

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